

Mental Health Escape Room Prepares Staff for Suicidal Patient Encounters

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Left to right: Paula Hofer, RNTTP RN and Lori Boggs, RNTTP RN pose for picture with manikin at Mental Health Escape Room simulation. (Photographer: Kendra Swaney)

VA Black Hills Healthcare System in Fort Meade, South Dakota created a mental health escape room called 'Don't Wait, Reach Out' to prepare their staff who may encounter suicidal patients. The education tool was implemented during September Suicide Prevention Month where learners were presented with a suicidal patient that required appropriate interventions to 'escape' the room. Learning objectives included demonstrating effective team communication, completing a safety room sweep and implementing alterations in care for the patient. The escape room simulation was delivered to every unit at VA Black Hills Healthcare System and community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) with modifications made to the scenario and environment based on the practice setting.

Participants represented a multidisciplinary group of learners including licensed practical nurses, registered nurses (RN), nursing assistants, social workers, chaplains, housekeeping, providers, the RN Transition-to-Practice program and respiratory therapy professionals. All of the surveys returned reported enjoying the escape room and that the

room improved understanding of the importance of communication in a crisis situation.

Veterans thinking about hurting or killing themselves or others, experiencing an emotional crisis, feeling hopeless or engaging in self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse should call the [Veterans Crisis Line](https://www.va.gov/vetcrisis/) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Press 1 for Veterans.